

to a synopsis of the Coliidae—one of the most characteristic and peculiar forms of the Ethiopian Avifauna. Mr. Pycraft, after a critical examination of every part of the structure of these birds, has come to the conclusion (see 'Ibis,' 1907, p. 253) that the Colies, which are admitted by everyone to be a very isolated group, have their nearest allies in the Swifts (Cypselidae).

The author of the present synopsis inclines rather to Garrod's view that they are related "on the one hand to the Picidae, and on the other to the Alcedinidae and Bucconidae." He admits only eight forms of *Colius* as sufficiently distinct for specific rank, although several of these, after the fashion now prevalent, have been separated into various geographical forms. Thus *C. erythromelon* has been divided into five subspecies, and *C. leucotis* into four.

A coloured plate, drawn by Keulemans, represents *Colius leucocephalus*, and gives details of the structure of some of the other species.

In the 7th Part of the 'Genera Avium' Dr. Dubois discusses the family Pelecanidae, which contains only the single genus *Pelecanus*. Of this group eleven forms are recognised. But we cannot agree with the author in ranking the South-American *P. molinae* as only a subspecies of *P. fuscus*. It is a perfectly distinct species. We are doubtful of *P. sharpii* (of which a coloured figure is given) being anything more than a colour-phase of *P. onocrotalus*.

Dr. Dubois also gives us in Part 8 a summary of our knowledge of the peculiar Ethiopian family Musophagidae. The author recognises 33 species and subspecies, which he places in 7 genera. Two nicely coloured plates illustrate the varied forms of this group.

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#### XXVII.—Letters, Notes and Extracts.

WE have received the following letters addressed "To the Editors of 'The Ibis'":—

SIRS,—In the autumn of 1905 I had the pleasure of meeting, in London, several members of the "Ziegler Polar

Expedition," who were then returning from Franz-Josef Land to the United States. Among many details of their two years' stay in the Arctic Regions, the most interesting to me was the fact that they had obtained several specimens of a Ptarmigan. Unfortunately the skins had been shipped with the heavy luggage to New York, so that I could not examine them; and I have only just received full information regarding the species to which the birds belong. Mr. Champ of New York, who superintended most of the details of the Expedition on Mr. Ziegler's behalf, and to whose energy its relief after the loss of the ship was due, kindly sent the skins to the American Museum of Natural History, New York, at my request; and I append Mr. Miller's reply to my enquiries concerning them. From p. 115, 'Fighting the Polar Ice,' by Mr. Anthony Fiala, it appears that the birds were shot in 1904 by the members of Mr. R. W. Porter's party.

Although several expeditions had previously visited the archipelago of Franz-Josef's Land, this is the first record of a Ptarmigan being found there. I also have never been able to obtain any absolute record of either Ptarmigan or Grouse being found on any of the three islands of Novaya Zemlya. The only reliable information that we have as to the distribution of these birds in that direction is from Mr. F. G. Jackson, in his book 'The Great Frozen Land' (p. 112). He says:—"About eight miles up from our camp I found some *Koropatki*—the *rüper* of Norway, and our own Ptarmigan—on a patch of scrub. This was the first time I had met with it; and, so far as my own journey is concerned, the Korotaika River (or Karataikha)—a river running into Barents Sea, some 40 miles south of Habarova—marks its north-eastern limit."

If any stragglers from Spitsbergen have succeeded in establishing themselves on Franz-Josef Land, it is possible that they may eventually extend to Novaya Zemlya, as they are doubtless the species of *Lagopus* best adapted to withstand the climate of that country.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

HENRY J. PEARSON.

*The Ptarmigan of Franz-Josef's Land.*

The pair of Ptarmigan collected by the Expedition on Alger Island, Franz-Josef Land, in June 1904, belong to a little-known species of considerable rarity in collections.

This is the Spitsbergen or Hyperborean Ptarmigan, *Lagopus hyperboreus*, a very near relative of two well-known species—the Alpine Ptarmigan (*L. mutus*) of the mountains of Europe, and the Rock-Ptarmigan (*L. rupes-tris*) of the Arctic Regions of both hemispheres. From both these species it differs in its larger size and in the presence of a greater amount of white on the tail-feathers, though in the latter respect there is considerable individual variation.

The Spitsbergen Ptarmigan was first described by Sundevall in 1838, and it is represented by a coloured plate in Elliot's 'Monograph of the Tetraonidæ.'

It has not before been recorded outside of Spitsbergen; and from the fact that no Ptarmigan had previously been observed on Franz-Josef Land, it seems likely that the birds found there in 1904 had been blown over from Spitsbergen.

The present pair of birds is an excellent illustration of the fact already recorded, that the male of this species retains the white winter-plumage considerably later in the spring than does the female. The male is wholly pure white, while the female, although taken at the same time, is in the brown plumage of summer.

The Museum expresses its gratitude for the opportunity of adding to its collection this heretofore unrepresented species.

W. DE W. MILLER,

Assist. Ornithologist,

American Museum of Natural History.

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MESSIEURS,—Dans le Musée fondé à Zi-ka-wei, près Chang-Hai, par mon prédécesseur, le Père Heude, S.J., j'ai trouvé quelques oiseaux, dignes, me semble-t-il, d'être mentionnés.

*Pitta nympha*.—Un spécimen tué à Zi-ka-wei le 17 Mai,

1897. Le Musée de Chang-Haï en possède un autre, capturé à l'embouchure du Yangtse-kiang. Deux autres, et de la même localité, sont cités par M. Styan ('Ibis,' 1891, p. 359). Les individus rencontrés à Formose, à Amoy, à Echéfou, ainsi qu'au Japon, bien qu'en très petit nombre, autorisent peut-être à chercher cette brève sur tout le littoral chinois.

*Merops bicolor*.—Nos exemplaires viennent des collines qui avoisinent le lac Pó-yang. Je ne sais si ce guêpier a été pris sur d'autres points de la Chine.

*Hierococcyx sparverioïdes*.—Deux individus provenant du Ning-kouo-fou, où j'ai pu, moi-même, entendre à satiété cet infatigable chanteur en Mai dernier. Le P. A. David ('Les Oiseaux de la Chine,' p. 63) ne l'avait pas trouvé au Kiang-si, ni dans les provinces plus orientales. Mais M. Styan a signalé son passage à Hank'cou en Avril, et sa présence à Chang-Haï en Septembre et Octobre, et encore sur les collines de Ning-po (Tchékiang) ('Ibis,' 1891, p. 484; 1899, p. 288). Depuis, M. La Touche l'a capturé à Foutcheou, et tout dernièrement à Tchenkiang ('Ibis,' 1900, p. 45; 1907, p. 9). On doit donc conclure que ce coucou descend tous les printemps de l'Himalaya, et se répand jusqu'aux frontières les plus orientales de la Chine.

*Corvus corone*.—Un spécimen, tué à Tch'angtcheou (au N. de Ou-si, sur le canal impérial). Cette espèce n'a été, jusqu'ici, signalée sur le continent chinois que par M. La Touche, dans le Foukien ('Ibis,' 1892, p. 429). Mais la rencontre qu'en ont faite MM. Swinhoe aux îles Naotchao, près d'Haïnan, Whitely à Hakodate, Seebohm à Tsushima (Japon), Campbell à Séoul (Corée) ('Ibis,' 1870, p. 349; 1874, p. 159; 1892, p. 92 et p. 238), ferait croire que le *Corvus corone* habite, en petit nombre, il est vrai, tout l'Extrême Orient.

*Syrnium newarensense*.—Deux exemplaires, l'un de Nantchang (Kiangsi), l'autre de Kienté (Nganhoei), juin 1872 et printemps 1873. C'est aussi de Kienté précisément que M. Styan a reçu un individu de cette belle espèce ('Ibis,' 1899, p. 289), pendant que M. Rickett ('Ibis,' 1900, p. 57) en recueillait un autre dans le Foukien. Peut-être cette chouette indienne a-t-elle une aire de dispersion plus con-



sidérable qu'on ne l'a soupçonné jusqu'ici (v. 'Les Oiseaux de la Chine,' p. 46).

Je suis, Messieurs, avec respect, votre tout dévoué serviteur,

Zi-ka-wei Museum,  
près Chang-Haï (Chine),

F. COURTOIS.

28/3/07.

SIRS,—As there has been some discussion in 'The Ibis' about the identity of the Wild Swan of Seistan (see 'Ibis,' 1906, pp. 397, 612, 787), I beg leave to inform you that when I was in Calcutta in April last year (1906) I visited the Indian Museum and saw, by the kind permission of Mr. Annandale, the specimen transmitted to that institution by Col. Sir Henry Macmahon.

After a careful examination of it, I think I may confidently say that it is undoubtedly an example of the Whooper (*Cygnus musicus*).

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

Zoological Society's Gardens,  
Regent's Park, London, N.W.,  
April 24th, 1907.

A. THOMSON.

*Retirement of Dr. Emil A. Goeldi.*—We regret to see the announcement that Dr. Goeldi has felt it necessary, after twenty years' service in Brazil, to resign the Directorship of the Museum at Pará, which bears his own name and will ever remain a testimony of his splendid zeal and abilities. He is succeeded, we are informed, by Dr. J. Huber, who has lately had charge of the Botanical Section of the Goeldi Museum. Dr. Goeldi, who, as our readers know, has made many excellent communications to this Journal, will in future reside at Berne (36 Ziegler Strasse).

*Birds of the Central Thian-Shan.*—In Dr. Merzbacher's recently published account of his exploration of the Thian-Shan mountains of Central Asia \*, we read of the difficulties that he met with in obtaining botanical specimens.

"Still less favorable," he continues, "were the con-

\* 'The Central Thian-Shan Mountains, 1902-3.' By Dr. Gottfried Merzbacher. London: John Murray, 1905. 1 vol., 8vo.

ditions for gathering zoological specimens during a mountain-expedition, the aims of which were directed to quite another domain. Still we did not altogether neglect this branch of science. The specimens collected are numerous, and many of them are of high interest." In reply to enquiries whether any birds were obtained, Dr. Merzbacher kindly informs us that he brought home a series of from 400 to 500 bird-skins from this interesting and little-known district in the centre of the great continent of Asia, and that the "systematic elaboration" of them has been undertaken by Dr. H. Schalow, of Berlin. Dr. Schalow has already described two new subspecies from Dr. Merzbacher's collection (*Sylvia nisoria merzbacheri* and *Acanthis cannabina merzbacheri*, Orn. Monatsb. 1907, p. 3), and will shortly publish a complete account of it. Dr. Merzbacher is on the eve of departure for another exploring expedition in the Thian-Shan.

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*The Ostrich-Farm at Matarieh, Egypt.*—The Ostrich-farm at Matarieh, near Cairo (belonging to the Société Anonyme du Parc de Matarieh), seems to be still in a prosperous condition. On the occasion of a recent visit (March 7th) the writer was informed that there were about 1400 birds on the farm, and that about 300 young birds were reared every year. As they mate, the pairs are separated from the herd and placed by themselves in different small enclosures, the males being at this epoch, in many cases, savage and even dangerous, unless great care be taken. Pairs were seen in process of laying, incubating, and attending to young birds of different stages of growth. The chief food given at that time of year was fresh clover. The price asked for a pair at the farm is £50.

From what I have observed at this and other Ostrich-farms\*, I have come to the conclusion that in captivity, at any rate, the Ostrich is strictly monogamous, and that the old and oft-repeated stories about several females laying in one nest attended by one male are more or less mythical.

The Ostriches examined on this occasion appeared to be

\* See 'Ibis,' 1903, p. 436; P. Z. S. 1895, p. 400.

all *Struthio camelus*, except one fine adult specimen of *S. molybdophanes*.—P. L. S.

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*The Return of the Ruwenzorian Expedition.*—In our January number (above, p. 220) we inserted a letter from Mr. Douglas Carruthers containing an account of his proposed route home from Entebbe, on Lake Victoria. We have now the pleasure of announcing that his expedition terminated successfully, and that both he and his companion, Dr. Wollaston, have both arrived home. Leaving Entebbe in the middle of September, they crossed Uganda to Kasinga—a Belgian Station at the northern end of Lake Albert Edward. Thence they turned southwards to the north end of Lake Tanganyika, passing on the way the Mfumbiro volcanoes and Lake Kivu. The volcanoes, one of which rises to the height of 13,000 feet, were found to furnish many of the birds previously met with on Ruwenzori.

Messrs. Carruthers and Wollaston reached the Congo Free State station of Uvira on Tanganyika at the end of 1906, and continued their journey south by canoe down the west shore of the lake to Baraka, on Burton Gulf. Here they turned due west, and after a journey of six weeks across country reached the Congo River at Kasongo. From Kasongo they travelled by canoe, steamer, and railway to the mouth of the Congo, whence they took the steamer to Southampton. Owing to severe attacks of fever, the collection of birds made on the route home was small; but about 250 specimens were obtained, amongst which are examples of many interesting species from the Mfumbiro volcanoes and the west shore of Tanganyika.

Messrs. Woosnam and Dent also carried out their plans for returning home through the Congo State on a more northern route successfully. From Uganda they travelled due west through the great Congo forest, and down the Aruwimi River to the junction of that stream with the Congo. Thence they descended the latter to its mouth, and took the steamer home. Shortly after arriving in London, however, Mr. Woosnam left England again to join Col. Bailward on another journey through Persia (see above, p. 74).

The specimens obtained on the Ruwenzorian Expedition, about 2,500 in number, are being examined by Mr. Ogilvie-Grant, who was, in fact, the planner of the expedition. Some 30 of the species represented have already been characterized as new in the Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club.

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*Return of the Alexander-Gosling Expedition.*—Our last published news of the Alexander-Gosling Trans-African Expedition (see 'Ibis,' 1906, p. 615) left the sole survivor struggling slowly eastwards against the rapid flow of the Welle River and its affluents. We are now happily able to record that all remaining difficulties have been overcome, and that Mr. Boyd Alexander is safe at home and in good health. He gave an excellent account of his lengthy and adventurous journey from the Niger by Lake Chad to the Nile at the meeting of the Royal Geographical Society on May 13th last. As his narrative and map will shortly be published in full in the 'Geographical Journal,' we need not say more on the subject than that early in October last year the expedition crossed the water-parting between the basins of the Congo and the Nile, and descending the River Yei to Avurra, on the borders of the Anglo-Egyptian province of Bahr-el-Ghazal, reached the main stream of the Nile at Gaba Shambi. From here to Khartum was an easy transit by steamer, and thence Port Sudan was reached by the new railway on January 14th, and England a fortnight later.

The collection of Birds made by Mr. Alexander during his journey, with the assistance of his excellent taxidermist, José Lopez, contains about 2500 skins. Some sixteen new species represented in it have already been described in the 'Bulletin' of the British Ornithologists' Club, and others will no doubt be found when the series has been thoroughly examined.

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*The Aiken Collection of North-American Birds.*—We are informed by Mr. W. L. Selater that, through the generosity of General William J. Palmer, the collection of North-



American birds formed by Mr. C. H. Aiken has become the property of the Colorado College Museum. The collection includes over 5000 specimens, embracing examples of about 500 species and subspecies, and is especially rich in examples from the States of Colorado and Arizona and the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Aiken (a well-known taxidermist of Colorado Springs) has been at work forming it for the last thirty-five years, and has succeeded in making it the most complete collection of the birds of Colorado that has yet been brought together. It contains specimens of about 250 of the 380 species that have been ascribed to the avifauna of the State, and has been consulted by several authorities who have written on birds. It is of course of great importance to science that such a collection, formed by one of the best authorities on the birds of Colorado, should be deposited in some public institution in the State; and General Palmer's liberality has enabled this to be done. It has been arranged that a complete set of representatives of the species met with in Colorado shall be mounted and arranged for public inspection, while the bulk of the series remains "in skin," and will be placed in cabinets for the use of students.

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*A new Work on the Petrels and Albatroses.*—The Petrels and Albatroses were always among the favourite groups of the late Osbert Salvin, and the excellent account of the Tubinares in the 25th volume of the 'Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum' was his handiwork. No opportunity was ever lost of obtaining desirable specimens of the Petrel family for the Salvin-Godman Collection, which is now incorporated with that of the British Museum. To illustrate the valuable series thus formed, Messrs. Salvin and Godman had a large number of figures of the different species drawn on stone by Keulemans, but unfortunately Salvin did not live to write the letterpress for his projected work. This has now been undertaken by our President, Dr. Godman, who hopes to be able to publish the 'Monograph of the Petrels' (with about one hundred plates) in four parts, the first to be issued before the end of the year.

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*Birds-of-Paradise in England.*—Mr. Walter Goodfellow, the Collector, has recently returned from New Guinea, bringing with him a number of very rare birds. Among these are two examples of the Red Bird-of-Paradise (*Paradisea rubra*), a Twelve-wired Bird-of-Paradise (*Selencides nigricans*), and several pairs of the King Bird-of-Paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*). On account of their sober plumage, hens of the Paradise-birds were formerly little valued, and the only example recorded as having been imported is a hen King-bird that died the day after reaching Sir William Ingram's aviary. Moreover, there are many Lories and Lorikeets, a Great Black Cockatoo (*Microglossus aterrimus*), and a Racket-tailed Parrot (*Prioniturus platurus*). On arrival the birds were sent, by the courtesy of Mrs. Johnstone, to her fine aviaries at Burrswood, near Groombridge; they were in excellent condition, shewing that sedulous attention must have been given to them on the passage home. On Saturday one of the Red, the Twelve-wired, and two pairs of the King Bird-of-Paradise arrived at the Zoological Gardens and were placed in the Tropical Bird-house, where they will be a great attraction. The hen King-birds are the only forms new to the collection; but there are also a pair of Red-fronted Lories (*Chalcopsittacus scintillatus*) and the Racket-tailed Parrot. Both species have been exhibited before, and these are not yet on show, but are kept inside in the Parrot-house, where is also another rarity—the New-Zealand Night Parrot (*Stringops habroptilus*), a nocturnal species, which is rapidly disappearing from its native haunts.—‘*The Times*,’ June 12th, 1907.

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*Death of Professor Newton.*—As our last pages are passing through the press we learn with the utmost regret of the death on June 7th of Professor Alfred Newton, of Magdalene College, Cambridge, so well known to all of us, and one of the original founders of ‘*The Ibis*.’ It is with great reluctance that we postpone a notice of his life and work until our next number; but the time is too short to compile a memorial worthy of him, or indeed to obtain the necessary material.